

A GREAT  
10¢  
ENTERTAINMENT  
JULY-AUGUST

# GENE AUTRY<sup>®</sup> COMICS



A DELL  
10¢  
MAGAZINE

JULY-AUGUST

# GENE AUTRY

## COMICS

IN 25 A.M.



# GENE AUTRY

## and The HAUNTED RANCH

MAYBE THIS HOMBRE COMIN' IN THE  
BUCKBOARD CAN TELL US WHERE  
TO FIND THE TUMBLIN'-K SPREAD,  
CHAMP!

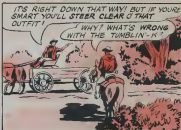


HEY, MISTER! WHICH WAY IS THE TRAIL  
TO JIM KERR'S RANCH THE TUMBLIN'-K?



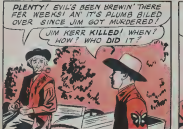
IT'S RIGHT DOWN THAT WAY! BUT IF YOU'RE  
SMART YOU'LL STEER CLEAR O' THAT  
OUTFIT!

WHY? WHAT'S WRONG  
WITH THE TUMBLIN'-K?



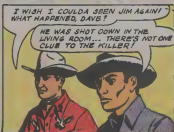
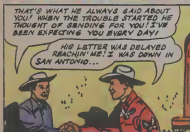
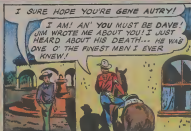
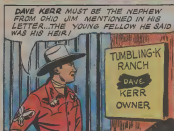
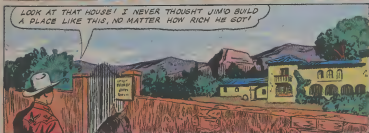
PLENTY! EVIL'S BEEN BREWIN' THERE  
FER WEEKS! AN' IT'S PLUMB BILED  
OVER SINCE JIM GOT MURDERED!

JIM KERR KILLED! WHEN?  
HOW? WHO DID IT?



WAL, THE SHERIFF FIGGERS IT WAS A  
ROBBER! BUT EVERYBODY ELSE THINKS  
IT WAIN'T NO HUMAN BEIN' PULLED  
THAT TRIGGER!





I HEARD SOME TALK ABOUT A GHOST... EL VIENTO...

THAT CRAZY GOSSIP'S COSTIN' ME PLENTY O' TROUBLE! MY CONHANDS ARE THREATENIN' TO QUIT!



SPOSE YOU BEGIN AT THE BEGINNIN', DAVE!

EL VIENTO WAS A BANDIT IN THE OLD SPANISH DAYS! HE BUILT THIS HOUSE! THERE'S A LEGEND THAT, EVERY TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, HE COMES BACK TO HAUNT IT AND MURDER THE TENANTS!



A WEEK BEFORE UNCLE JIM WAS SHOT, STRANGE THINGS BEGAN TO HAPPEN... FLICKERING LIGHTS AT NIGHT, WEIRD WHISTLINGS, WARNING NOTES...



WHEN UNCLE JIM GOT A DEATH THREAT, HE LAUGHED AT IT! THAT NIGHT A SHOT AWOKE ME! I RAN DOWNSTAIRS AND FOUND HIM... DYING...



HE JUST HAD STRENGTH ENOUGH TO WHISPER ONE SENTENCE... "TELL GENE... CHIEF YELLOW HAIR..."



"CHIEF YELLOW HAIR"? THAT'S ONE INDIAN I NEVER HEARD OF!

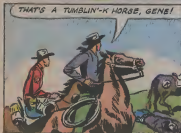
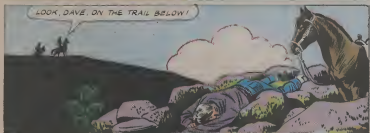
IT'S THE RIGHT NAME, I'M SURE! THEN UNCLE JIM DIED WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD!



A GHOST BANDIT .. AND AN INDIAN CHIEF! IT SOUNDS LOCO, DAVE! DOES ANYONE ELSE KNOW ABOUT JIM'S MESSAGE TO ME?

NO! I FIGGERED IT WAS NOBODY'S BUSINESS BUT YOURS!





KNOW HIM, DAVE?

IT'S WALT THOMAS! ONE OF OUR  
TOP HANDS!

DO YOU KNOW ANY REASON WHY  
SOMEBODY WOULD WANT TO KILL HIM?

NO!

HERE COMES A RIDER! MAYBE HE KNOWS  
SOMETHING ABOUT THIS!

IT'S HANK GLIDDEN, OUR FOREMAN!

I HEARD SHOTS! WHAT HAPPENED?

WALT THOMAS HAS BEEN  
MURDERED!

GENE, THIS IS HANK GLIDDEN, FOREMAN OF  
THE TUMBLIN'-K! MEET GENE AUTRY,  
HANK!

HOWDY!

GLAD TO KNOW YOU!

SO EL VIENTO'S BEEN AT IT AGAIN! POOR  
WALT...

I NEVER HEARD OF A GHOST  
TOTTIN' A SIX-GUN!

WELL, WHEN THE REST O' THE BOYS  
HEAR ABOUT THIS, I'LL LAY ODDS  
THEY'LL BLAME HIM FOR IT.. AN'  
START HIGH-TALIN' IT FOR A SAFER  
PLACE!

IF THEY QUIT, I'M SUNK! A TENDERFOOT LIKE ME NEEDS PLENTY OF HELP TO RUN THIS BIG RANCH!

DON'T WORRY, DAVE! I'LL SEE YOU THROUGH! NOW LET'S GET GOIN'!



A LITTLE WHILE BEFORE YOU RODE IN, WALT SAID HE WAS GOING TO TOWN TO TELL THE SHERIFF SOMETHING ABOUT THE GHOST!



DID ANYBODY ELSE HEAR HIM SAY THAT?

YES! THREE OR FOUR OF THE BOYS WERE THERE!



THINK CAREFULLY, DAVE! IF THE KILLER OVERHEARD WALT, WOULDN'T HE FIGURE WALT KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT JIM'S MURDER?

WHY... UH... YES...



THEN WOULDN'T HE HIT LEATHER FAST TO AMBUSH WALT ON THE WAY TO TOWN BEFORE HE COULD SPILL WHAT HE KNEW TO THE SHERIFF?



IF THAT'S TRUE, GENE, IT MEANS THE MURDERER MUST BE RIGHT HERE ON THE TUMBLIN'-K!

EITHER THAT, OR HE'S GOT A PAL HERE!

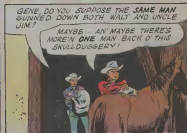
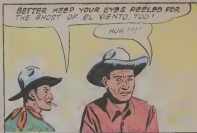


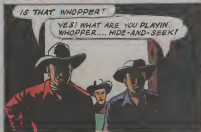
... A FEW MINUTES LATER...

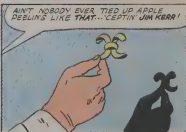
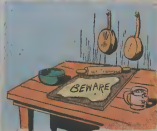
...AN' THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED, BOYS! WALT WAS PROBABLY SHOT TO KEEP HIM FROM TALKIN' TO THE SHERIFF! SO IF YOU COME ACROSS ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS, DON'T TALK ABOUT IT... EXCEPT TO ME!











DID YOU SEE THE GHOST DOIN' THESE THINGS, WHOPPER?

NODE! I WUZ IN TH' FRONT PARLOR, TRYIN' TO FIND OUT WHO WUZ PLAYIN' JIM'S GEBSTAR!

UNCLE JIM'S GUITAR HADN'T BEEN OUT OF THE CASE SINCE HE DIED!



I'LL SHOW YUH! I WUZ SO SKEERED, I LEFT EVERYTHING JEST LIKE IT WUZ!



IT'S WORKIN' SWELL, HANK, BUT LET'S GET RID O' THAT AUTRY BIRD, FAST! HE'S TOO NOSY!

DON'T WORRY, ARTIE! WE'LL FIX HIM!



THAR IT IS! ON THE CHAIR! RIGHT WHERE JIM'S G-GHOST LEFT IT!



THAT'S UNCLE'S GUITAR, SURE ENOUGH!



WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE JIM'S GHOST WAS PLAYIN' IT, WHOPPER?

CAUSE THE TUNE I HEERD WUZ HIS FAVORITE -- "ROAMIN' BY THE GLOAMIN'". HE WUZ ALWAYS PLAYIN' IT!



THE WINDOWS'RE ALL LOCKED, AUTRY, AN' SO'S TH' FRONT DOOR! NOBODY BUT A G-GHOST COULDA GOT IN HERE WITHOUT ME SEEBIN' HIM!



BUT SOMEBODY DID GET IN - AN' IT WASN'T A GHOST! WHEN YOU WENT TO THE PARLOR, WHOPPER, THAT PERSON SLIPPED OUT TO THE KITCHEN AN'...

BUT THAT AIN'T POSSIBLE...

WHOEVER'S DOIN' ALL THIS KNEW YOUR UNCLE MIGHTY WELL, DAVE... HIS FAVORITE TUNE AN' HOW HE PEELED AN APPLE...

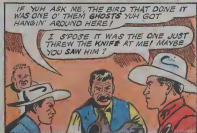
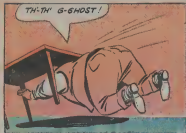
THAT'S NOT MUCH HELP, GENE! EVERYBODY HERE HAS BEEN ON THE PLACE AT LEAST A YEAR! THEY ALL KNEW UNCLE JIM WELL!

BE SURE TO BLOCK THE DOOR SO'S I CAN GET AWAY, ARTIE!

OKAY, BOSS!

GET GOIN', ARTIE! ATRY'S COMIN' INTO RANGE!

WHAT?!



I DON'T KNOW NOTHIN' ABOUT NO KNIFE-THROWIN, MISTER! I COME FOR MY MONEY! I'M QUITTIN'!



BE SENSIBLE, ARTIE! THERE'S NO SUCH THINGS AS GHOSTS!

QUIT GABBIN' AN PAY ME OFF!



EVER SEE THIS KNIFE BEFORE, WHOPPER?

Y-YEAH ... IT'S M-MY B-BREAD KNIFE! B-BUT, I DIDN'T---

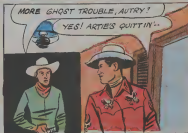


I'M SURE YOU DIDN'T THROW IT, WHOPPER! AN' I'M GETTIN' AN IDEA WHO DID!



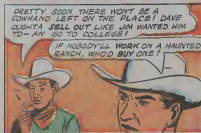
MORE GHQST TROUBLE, AVTRY?

YES! ARTIE'S QUITTIN'..



PRETTY SOON THERE WOYD BE A COWHAND LEFT ON THE PLACE! DAVE OUGHTA SELL OUT LIKE JIM WANTED HIM TO- AN' GO TO COLLEGE!

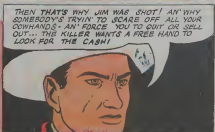
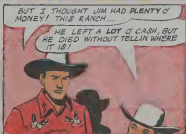
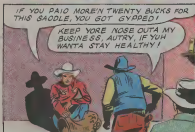
IF NOBODY'LL WORK ON A HAUNTED RANCH, WHO'D BUY ONE?



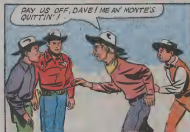
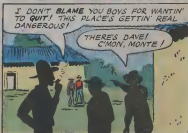
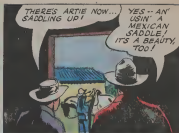
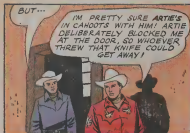
I MIGHT BUY IT! I AMN'T SCARED O' GHOSTS!

THAT'S RIGHT INTERESTIN'! KINDA PUTS YOU IN A CLASS BY YOURSELF, DOESN'T IT?









NOT SO FAST, HANK! LISTEN, BOYS! IF I PROMISE TO CLEAR UP THIS MYSTERY IN THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, WILL YOU STICK IT OUT TILL THEN?



I'M WILLIN'-- I GUESS--WHAT SAY, SANDY?

A-ALL RIGHT, B-BUT IF I DONT WAKE UP DEAD TOMORROW M-MORNIN', I'LL BE S-SURPRISED!



LATER  
I HOPE SHERIFF MARKS REMEMBERS ME, CHAMP, SO'S HE WONT MIND ANSWERIN' A COUPLE O' QUESTIONS!



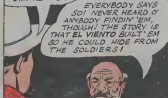
SILENCE  
I'M SURE GLAD YOU'RE TAKIN' ON THIS CASE, AVTRY! I'VE GOT MY HANDS FULL--

I'M GLAD TO DO WHAT I CAN, SHERIFF, BUT I MAY NEED YOUR HELP AT THE SHOWDOWN!



I'D LIKE TO KNOW TWO THINGS-- FIRST, ARE THERE ANY SECRET PASSAGES IN THAT HOUSE OF JIM KERR'S?

EVERYBODY SAYS SO! NEVER HEARD O' ANYBODY FINDIN' 'EM, THOUGH! THE STORY IS THAT EL VIENTO BUILT 'EM SO HE COULD HIDE FROM THE SOLDIERS!



THE SECOND THING IS-- HAVE YOU HEARD O' AN INDIAN IN THESE PARTS CALLED "CHIEF YELLOW HAIR"?

NOPE! THERE AINT BEEN ANY INJUNS IN THIS COUNTY FOR THIRTY YEARS!



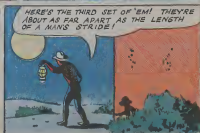
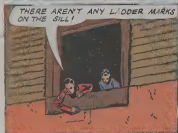
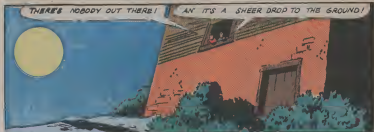
SEND WORD IF YOU NEED ME, GENE! I'LL COME PRONTO! SORRY I WASN'T MUCH HELP...

YOU'VE HELPED A LOT, SHERIFF!









GUESS I'D BETTER NOT TAKE CHANCES  
ON BEIN' SEEN BY THE HOMBRE  
THAT MADE THOSE MARKS!



IF I WAS GOIN' TO HIDE SOMETHIN'  
QUICK, I'D PICK THE BARN! MAYBE HE  
DID, TOO!



THERE'S NOTHIN' THAT COULDA MADE  
THOSE MARKS DOWN HERE! SO MAYBE  
IT'S UP IN THE HAYLOFT!



I'VE HIT SOMETHING!



STILTS! SO THEY'RE WHAT MADE THOSE MARKS  
AN' RAISED HIM UP TO WHOPPER'S WINDOW! THAT  
HOMBRE'S A SMART ONE!

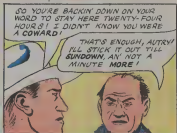


PHOSPHORESCENT RAIN! THAT  
EXPLAINS WHOPPER'S GHOST WITH A  
SHINY FACE!



NO USE TIPPIN' HIM OFF I'M WISE TO  
HIS LITTLE GAME, TILL I'M READY TO  
START DEALIN' THE LAST HAND!







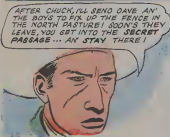
HEY, ARTIE! ON YOUR FEET!

GO 'WAY! I WAS UP HALF  
THE NIGHT PLAYIN' GHOST!



WE GOTTA WORK FAST! AUTRY'S  
GETTIN' TOO SMART FOR COMFORT!

OKAY! WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?



AFTER CHUCK, I'LL SEND DAVE AN'  
THE BOYS TO FIX UP THE FENCE IN  
THE NORTH PASTURE! SOON'S THEY  
LEAVE, YOU GET INTO THE SECRET  
PASSAGE... AN' STAY THERE!



I'LL DROP A HINT TO AUTRY THAT THE  
FIREPLACE CARVIN'S MIGHT OPEN TO  
THE SECRET PASSAGE -- AN' WHEN HE  
GOES SNOOPIN' ...

I GET IT!



LATER... DAVE,  
SANDY AND MONTE  
LEAVE FOR THE  
NORTH PASTURE...

THANKS FOR TAKIN' MY PLACE, DAVE! I'M STILL  
LANE FROM WHOPPER FALLIN' ON ME! AN'  
THAT FENCE SURE NEEDS FIXIN'!

THAT'S OKAY, HANK!  
I'LL TAKE MONTE AND  
SANDY AN' GO RIGHT  
OUT THERE!



NOW TO TAKE CARE O' MISTER AUTRY!



HOLD IT, BOYS! WE'LL LEAVE THE  
HORSES HERE AND GO BACK ON FOOT,  
LIKE GENE TOLD US!



IF AUTRY FELL FOR THAT TALK O' MINE ABOUT THE SECRET PASSAGE, HE'LL BE RIGHT IN LINE WITH THIS WINDOW!



YEAH! THERE HE IS...THE DOPE!



HERE'S WHERE THE TUMBLIN'-K GETS A THIRD GHOST!



IF I'VE GUESSED RIGHT, HANK OUGHTA BE ALONG ANY MINUTE NOW!

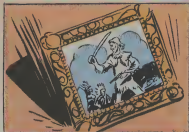


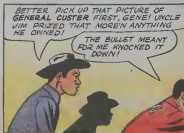
MIRRORS SURE ARE HANDY GADGETS!



OWWWW!







CHIEF YELLOW HAIR??? THIS IS  
GENERAL CUSTER!!



I REMEMBER NOW! THE INDIANS  
CALLED GENERAL CUSTER, "CHIEF  
YELLOW HAIR"!



HERE, WHOPPER! HANG ONTO THIS TILL WE  
GET A COUPLE OF OTHER THINGS  
CLEARED UP!



G-GOSH! JIM NEVER EVEN LET  
ME DUST THIS PICTURE!!



HERE'S YOUR GHOST, BOYS!... ARTIE BATES!  
ONLY I'M AFRAID HE WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH  
TO HANG!

HUH? WHADDAYA MEAN?



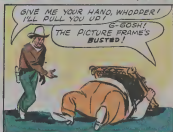
I'M PRETTY SURE THAT PAINT YOU USED  
WHEN YOU SCARED WHOPPER WITH THE  
GHOST FACE WAS POISONED! IT...

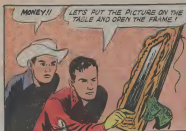
POISONED ???



I GUESS HANK FIGURED IF HE  
GOT RID OF YOU, TOO, HE'D  
HAVE ALL THE CASH FOR  
HIMSELF!

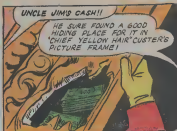






MONEY!!

LET'S PUT THE PICTURE ON THE TABLE AND OPEN THE FRAME!



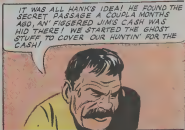
UNCLE JIM! CASH!!

HE SURE FOUND A GOOD HIDING PLACE FOR IT IN 'CHIEF YELLOW HAIR' CUSTER'S PICTURE FRAME!

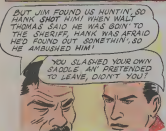


I'M A DYIN' MAN! THAT POISONED PAINT!! GET ME TO A DOC, QUICK!

NOT TILL YOU'VE DONE SOME TALKIN', ARTIE! HANK WAS IN THIS WITH YOU, WASN'T HE?

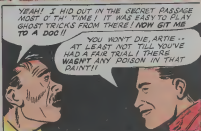


IT WAS ALL HANK'S IDEA! HE FOUND THE SECRET PASSAGE A COUPLA MONTHS AGO, AN' FIGGERED JIM'S CASH WAS HID THERE! WE STARTED THE GHOST STUFF TO COVER OUR HUNTIN' FOR THE CASH!



BUT JIM FOUND US HUNTIN', SO HANK SHOT HIM! WHEN WALT THOMAS SAID HE WAS GOIN' TO THE SHERIFF, HANK WAS AFRAID HE'D FOUND OUT SOMETHIN', SO HE AMBUSHED HIM!

YOU SLASHED YOUR OWN SADDLE AN' PRETENDED TO LEAVE, DIDN'T YOU?



YEAH! I HID OUT IN THE SECRET PASSAGE MOST O' TH' TIME! IT WAS EASY TO PLAY GHOST TRICKS FROM THERE! NOW GIT ME TO A DOC!!

YOU WON'T DIE, ARTIE -- AT LEAST NOT TILL YOU'VE HAD A FAIR TRIAL! THERE WASN'T ANY POISON IN THAT PAINT!!



SO YOU TRICKED ME INTO TALKIN', YOU...

TAKE 'EM AWAY, BOYS! THE SHERIFF'LL BE GLAD TO SEE 'EM!



THEN THERE AINT REALLY NO GHOST!

NO! HANK AND ARTIE WERE PLAYIN' THOSE TRICKS TO SCARE YOU BOYS AWAY AND GET THE RANCH FROM DAVE!

NOW THE PLACE ISN'T 'HAUNTED' ANY MORE, THANKS TO GENE!!



"Do-a-vey! Dovey Adams!"

When Mom used that tone Dovey knew he must answer a-running or she'd coop him up in the house all day and tell Dad on him that night. Dad was Sheriff Fred Adams and his blue eyes could turn to glinting ice when he was angry. So Dovey propped the old wagon wheel, with which he had been playing, against the side of the stable and roced across the ranch yard toward the house.

Molly Adams was standing in the kitchen doorway, arms akimbo above her starched checked apron. "Look at that woodpile!" She pointed an accusing finger at a dozen sticks of wood scattered near the roin barrel. "Didn't Dad tell you to keep that wood piled neatly?"

"Yes'm." Dovey rubbed his bare toes in the dust. "But, Mom, the wheel got away from'me on' smacked into it."

"That owful wheel!" Molly interrupted. "It's always getting away from you! You broke a whole row of tomato plants with it, knocked over a poiful of milk, broke the hen yard fence..." She paused, her eyes thoughtful. "I've got a good mind to make you chop it up for kindling."

"Oh, no, Mom," Dovey wailed. "Please don't! I won't play with it in the yard again. I'll roll it up in the canyon. Please, Mom! I'm gettin' so good at rollin' it! Why, it goes just where I aim it, almost as if it was alive!"

Molly looked down into her son's eager, pleading face. She remembered the scorcity of toys for ten-year-olds in the raw, new West. "All right, Dovey,"

she said at last, "but, if you ever roll it near this house again, it goes up in smoke."

"And you won't tell Dad I... er... kindo forgot the chores this mornin'?"

Molly smiled. "Not if you hurry and do them while I mix up a batch of doughnuts. Doughnuts might moke Dad forget to ask whot time you got through."

"Maybe they'll moke him forget Block Mike, too," chirped Dovey, rocing away toward the scattered wood.

Those words rang in Molly's ears all day. If Fred only could forget Block Mike! For two months, ever since Fred had shot it out with three of Block Mike's gong, the shadow of the notorious outlaw had hung over them. Molly could remember every word of the bondit leader's threatening note: "Think yer smart, don't you, Sheriff? I'm comin' back to these ports and when I do I'm comin to get you!"

Black Mike had never been known to back down on a threat. Several graves in the Southwest bore mute testimony to that. So his shodow hayered blackly above the Adams home and Molly often saw worry in her husband's eyes. Fred Adams wasn't worried because he lacked courage but because he feared he would not beat Block Mike to the draw. Then the desperado's reign of terror would continue unchecked.

As soon as Dovey saw Dad that night, he knew something was wrong because the little muscles were bunched along Dad's jaw. And there was no wormth in Dad's blue eyes. They were frosty, like icicle tips.

Molly took one look at her tall, bronzed husband in the brightness of the kitchen and the question leaped from her lips, "He's back, isn't he, Fred?"

Fred nodded and tossed his big Stetson on the hook by the door. Cold chills ran up and down Davey's spine. Dad had not taken off his gun belt to hang it under the hat, as he usually did.

"Sheriff Bagby, over in Canon City, sent me word this noon that Black Mike's headed this way, robbin' an' shootin' as he comes. It won't be long now." Dad's voice was as frozen as his eyes.

Davey was a true child of the West, so he knew what Dad meant. He had seen guns spit death before. Silently he resolved that Black Mike's gun would not spit death at his beloved Dad. Not if HE could help it!

The Adams home was carefully barred and locked that night. Several times, as the hours dragged toward dawn, Molly slipped from window to window, checking the shadows, watching for moving ones. She knew that Black Mike would head for Fred first, to make good the threat he had made.

The sun was flooding the rangeland next morning when Fred came into the kitchen to find Molly cooking flap-jacks. He was wearing his gun and there were lines of strain around his mouth, but he grinned as he said:

"Where's Davey? Still sleepin'?"

Molly shook off her icy dread to smile back. "Mercy, no! He's out, doin' his chores. He says if Black Mike comes around, he wants the work caught up."

Fred chuckled. "He's a funny kid." He sniffed hungrily. "Gosh, those smell good. I'll have a coupla dozen."

Molly turned a flushed face from the stove. "Worrying hasn't taken your appetite then?"

Fred started for the table. "Nape, I can always eat . . . Black Mike or no Black Mike."

"Maybe I got somethin' to say about that!" The snarling voice came from the back door. "Up with 'em, Sheriff!"

Slowly Fred's hands rose into the air. Molly fought off faintness as she stared at the black-bearded giant in the open doorway.

"You might give him a chance to draw against you!" she blurted.

Black Mike leered at her. "Spunky, ain't ya? Well, I'm settlin' my score . . . here an' now!" The ugly muzzle of his gun pointed straight at Fred's broad chest.

Crash! Something hit Mike's legs, spilling him like a sack of meal. Crash! The same something landed against the breakfast table, smashing it to the floor. Instantly Fred was on top of the outlow, grabbing his gun and saying, "Reckon you talked too soon, Mike."

Molly was staring at the dust-smeared spokes in the wreckage of the table. "The wheel!" she gasped. "Davey's wagon wheel!"

Davey squeezed past Dad and his prisoner, his words tumbling out in an excited stream. "I didn't have a gun, Mom, so I got the wheel an' hid in the barn. I saw Black Mike sneakin' down from the canyon . . . all alone. Then I—" He stopped to eye the wreckage. "Gee! I sure messed things up, didn't I? Are you mad, Mom? Are you gonna burn the wheel?"

Molly gathered him into her arms, speaking through her tears. "Of course, not! You can keep the wheel always. I'll never say a word. Oh, Davey—my baby!"

"Baby, nothin'!" Fred said proudly. "Beginnin' tomorrow, he's goin' to learn how to use a gun . . . just in case he hasn't got a wagon wheel handy the next time he meets up with an outlaw!"

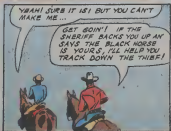
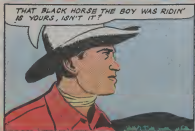
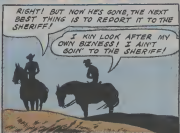
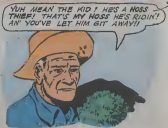
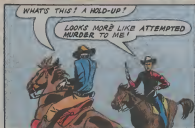




# GENE AUTRY

## and the Black IMP





THE ORNERY COYOTES!! THAT HOMBRE ON THE 'CHESTNUT  
MUSTA BEEN HIDIN' SOMEWHERE ... WAITIN'...

GUESS THEY QUIT CHASIN' US, IND,  
'CAUSE THEY FINALLY FIGGERED THEY'D  
NEVER CATCH YOU!

THAT'S STONE RIDGE YONDER, ISN'T IT?

YEAH! BUT I STILL SAY IT'S  
NO USE SEEIN' THE SHERIFF!  
THAT HOSS THIEF'S PROBABLY  
HALFWAY TO THE BORDER BY  
NOW!

WOULDN'T SURPRISE ME NONE IF YOU WUZ IN  
CANHOOTS WITH THAT HOSS THIEF!

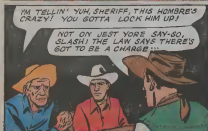
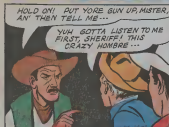
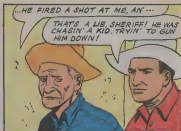
**CALA RIDGE  
SATURDAY AMO  
BATES  
CONTESTS**

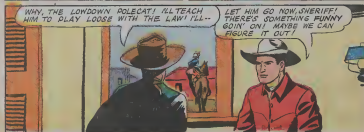
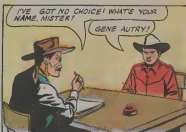
IF YOU'RE ON THE LEVEL, YOU  
DOUGHTA WANT TO TALK TO THE  
SHERIFF!

AN' IF YOU'RE NOT, I FIGURE THE  
LAW'LL WANT TO TALK TO YOU!

SLASH COBB!!! WHAT THE --

COVER THIS HOMBRE, SHERIFF!  
HE'S PLUMB LOCO! THINK'S I'M  
AN OUTLAW OR SOMETHIN'!





ALL RIGHT, ATRY! EVERYBODY IN THESE PARTS KNOWS ABOUT YOU! I'LL TELL YOU ANYTHING I KNOW, AN' GLAD TO!

I DON'T SAVVY WHY SLASH LIED ABOUT THE KID -- AN' WHY HE WAS CHASIN' HIM WITH A GUN!

SAY, ATRY, WHAT DID THIS KID LOOK LIKE?

ABOUT FIFTEEN...SANDY HAIR... FRECKLED FACE -- RIDIN' A BIG BLACK HORSE WITH A WHITE STAR ON ITS FOREHEAD!

THAT DESCRIPTION COULDN'T FIT ANYBODY BUT BOBBY RILEY AN' HIS HORSE, IMP!

DO YOU KNOW WHY SLASH SHOULD BE AFTER HIM?

I GOT A PRETTY GOOD IDEA! SLASH WORKS FOR DEKE MAXON! DEKE USED TO OWN IMP! HE WANTS HIM BACK BAD!

IF IMP USED TO BE DEKE'S HORSE, HOW COME BOBBY RILEY'S GOT HIM NOW?

BOBBY AN' HIS SISTER, NAN, OWN IMP LEGAL! DEKE OWNS IMP'S FATHER, SATAN!

DEKE TRIED TO TRAIN THE COLT, IMP, FOR RACIN'! BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY LUCK, SO HE SOLD HIM CHEAP TO BOBBY'S PA, GEORGE RILEY!

BOBBY AN' NAN WORKED MIRACLES WITH THAT COLT! IMP'S THE BEST RACEHORSE IN THE COUNTY TODAY!

WHEN DEKE FOUND THIS OUT, HE TRIED TO BUY IMP BACK! RILEY WOULDN'T SELL! TWO MONTHS ASO RILEY WAS DRY-GULCHED--SHOT IN THE BACK!



I'M POSITIVE DEKE WAS BACK O' THE KILLIN', BUT I CAN'T PROVE IT! HE'S BEEN TRYIN' TO FORCE THE KIDS TO SELL THE IMP!



BUT THEY TURNED HIM DOWN FLAT! THEY'VE GOT THEIR HEARTS SET ON PAYIN' OFF THE MORTGAGE BY WINNIN' THE BIG RACE AT THE RODEO!



DEKE'S GOT A HORSE IN THE RACE, TOO! SATAN THE SECOND, HALF BROTHER TO IMP! HE'S A SURE WINNER--IF IMP DOESN'T RUN!



THEN SLASH WAS TRYIN' TO STEAL IMP TO KEEP HIM OUT O' THE RACE!

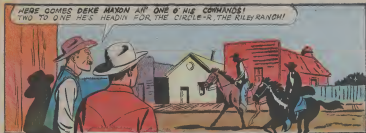
WHEN I STOPPED HIM FROM GOIN' AFTER BOBBY, HE TRIED TO GET ME OUTA THE WAY AN' THROW THE LAW OFF THE TRACK!



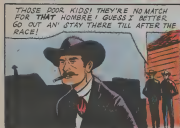
THAT MAKES SENSE, AUNT! DEKE CAN'T RACE IMP! THE HORSE WON'T LET ANYBODY RIDE HIM BUT BOBBY!



HERE COMES DEKE MAYON AN' ONE O' HIS COMMANDS!  
TWO TO ONE HE'S HEADIN' FOR THE CIRCLE-R, THE RILEY RANCH!



THOSE POOR KIDS! THEY'RE NO MATCH  
FOR THAT HOMBRE! GUESS I BETTER  
GO OUT AN' STAY THERE TILL AFTER THE  
RACE!



WHAT DO YOU THINK O' ME DRIFTIN' OUT  
AN' OFFERIN' MY SERVICES?

FINE! THE KIDS AN' I'LL BE  
MIGHTY GRATEFUL... IF YOU'VE  
GOT THE TIME!



I'VE GOT THE TIME... AN' I'D LIKE TO SEE  
THOSE KIDS GET A FAIR DEAL!

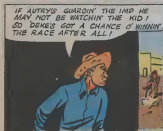
THE CIRCLE-R'S STRAIGHT OUT THIS  
ROAD -- WATCH YOUR STEP, AUTRY!



I WILL! AN' I'LL WATCH THAT RACE-  
HORSE, TOO!

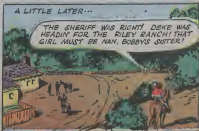


IF AUTRY'S GUARDIN' THE IMP HE  
MAY NOT BE WATCHIN' THE KID!  
SO DEKE'S GOT A CHANCE O' WINNIN'  
THE RACE AFTER ALL!

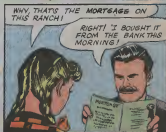


A LITTLE LATER...

THE SHERIFF WAS RIGHT! DEKE WAS  
HEADIN' FOR THE RILEY RANCH! THAT  
GIRL MUST BE NAN, BOBBY'S SISTER!







THAT'S THE DAY IMP IS GOING TO WIN THE BIG RACE AND FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS...MORE THAN ENOUGH TO PAY THE MORTGAGE!

DON'T BE TOO SURE ABOUT THAT, NAN! LOTS CAN HAPPEN BETWEEN NOW AN' THE RACE! BETTER THINK IT OVER...

I'M THROUGH THINKING AND LISTENING TO YOU!

NOT SO FAST, SISTER!  
LET GO OF ME!

I'M SICK O' YOUR STALLIN'! YOU SIGN IMP OVER TO ME OR I'LL ...

YOU'LL WHAT?

WHO IN BLAZES-----?

GET THEIR GUNS, MISS NAN!

BUT WHO... HOW... ?!

MY NAME'S GENE AUTRY,  
MISS NAN! I HEARD WHAT  
THIS HOMBRE SAID TO YOU!

YOU TWO GET MOVIN' FAST! AN'  
DON'T COME BACK HERE AGAIN!  
NEXT TIME I'LL SHOOT FIRST AN'  
TALK LATER!

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU  
MISTER AUTRY! BUT HOW DID YOU  
HAPPEN TO COME OUT HERE?

SHERIFF WEST TOLD ME THE WHOLE  
STORY! I FOLLOWED MAXON OUT HERE!



GOSH! THAT LOOKS LIKE THE CHESTNUT  
SLASH'S PAL WAS RIDIN'!

I FIGURED YOU AN' BOBBY COULD USE  
SOME EXTRA HELP IN GUARDIN' YOUR  
HORSE!

WE CERTAINLY CAN!



SO THAT'S HIS GAME! HE'S  
GOIN' TO PRETEND TO HELP US!

GUNS!!



I'LL OUT A STOP TO HIS TRICKS RIGHT NOW!

STICK 'EM UP!

WHAT...?

BOBBY!



PUT DOWN THOSE GUNS, BOBBY! THIS IS ...

I KNOW WHO HE IS! ONE O' DEKE'S GANG! TRYIN' TO TRICK US-

HE'S A FRIEND OF SHERIFF WEST! HE'S COME OUT TO HELP US GUARD IMP--

THAT'S HIS TRICK! HE'S PLANNIN' TO STEAL IMP-- FOR DEKE!

HE AN' SLASH COBB WAYLAID ME THIS MORNIN'! I'M GONNA TEACH HIM HE CAN'T--

YOU'RE ALL WRONG, BOBBY! GIVE ME THOSE GUNS! THIS MAN IS GENE AUTRY!

G-GENE AUTRY! THE OUTLAW HUNTER? ARE YOU SURE?

GEE! I DIDN'T KNOW--

MISTER AUTRY JUST MADE DEKE MAXON GO AWAY FROM HERE!

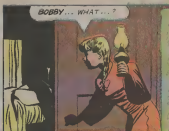
I'M AWFUL SORRY, MISTER AUTRY! I'M SORTA MIXED UP!

I'M HERE TO HELP YOU, BOBBY! I'LL TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED THIS MORNING WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU AN' SLASH--

A FEW MINUTES LATER--

...SO THAT'S THE STORY, BOBBY! NOW I'M HERE TO HELP KEEP AN EYE ON IMP TILL TIME FOR THE BIG RACE!





GENE! THANK GOODNESS, YOU'RE ALIVE!

HE'S A POOR SHOT, NAN-- ONLY SCRATCHED ME! I'LL BE ALLRIGHT!



A LITTLE LATER...

DEKE SURE PULLED A FAST ONE! I THOUGHT HE WAS AFTER IMP, NOT BOBBY!

DEKE'S SMART! HE KNOWS IMP CAN'T RACE UNLESS BOBBY RIDES HIM!



WE'LL GET BOBBY BACK IN TIME FOR THE RACE!!



CHAMP AN' I'LL TRACK 'EM DOWN!

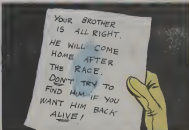


THERE'S SOMETHING PINNED ON THE WALL!

LOOKS LIKE A NOTE!



YOUR BROTHER  
IS ALL RIGHT.  
HE WILL COME  
HOME AFTER  
THE RACE.  
DON'T TRY TO  
FIND HIM IF YOU  
WANT HIM BACK  
ALIVE!

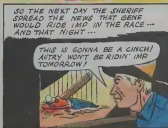
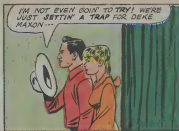


OH, GENE! WE WON'T DARE TRY TO FIND BOBBY NOW! THEY MIGHT HURT HIM--EVEN K-KILL HIM... IF WE DO!



I KNOW! BUT I'VE GOT AN IDEA, NAN! SOON'S ITS MORNING YOU RIDE TO TOWN AN' SEE SHERIFF WEST--ASK HIM TO SPREAD THE WORD THAT IMP'S GOIN' TO RACE...







HELL QUIET DOWN IF I CAN GET THIS BLANKET OVER HIS HEAD!



IT'S MIGHTY FUNNY THOSE SHOTS DIDN'T BRING THE GIRL!

SHE'S LIABE TO SHOW UP ANY MINUTE, BUT ---



HALT!

RUN, CURT!



SHE MISSED US A MILE!

SHE'S AFRAID O' HITTIN' IMP!



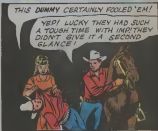
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, GENE?

SURE! THEY NEVER EVEN LOOKED IN CHAMP'S STALL WHERE I WAS HIDIN'...



THIS DUMMY CERTAINLY FOOLED 'EM!

YEP! LUCKY THEY HAD SUCH A TOUGH TIME WITH IMP! THEY DIDN'T GIVE IT A SECOND GLANCE!



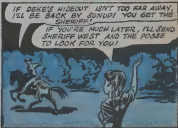
THEY MUST BE HEADING FOR INDIAN RIDGE! I HOPE YOU DON'T LOSE THEM, GENE!

DON'T WORRY, NANI! CHAMP AN' I ARE USED TO NIGHT-TRAILIN'!



IF DEKE'S HIDEOUT ISN'T TOO FAR AWAY, I'LL BE BACK BY SUNUP! YOU GET THE SHERIFF!

IF YOU'RE MUCH LATER, I'LL SEND SHERIFF WEST AND THE POSSE TO LOOK FOR YOU!



A LITTLE AFTER SUNUP, GENE RETURNS  
TO THE RANCH...

FIND 'EM, GENE?

I TRAILED 'EM TO A CABIN ON  
INDIAN RIDGE! BOBBY'S THERE,  
AND HE ISN'T HURT! LET'S GET  
GOIN', SHERIFF!



I WISH I COULD RIDE WITH YOU, GENE!

WOULDN'T BE SAFE, NAN! DEKE  
AN' HIS WHOLE GANG ARE UP  
THERE!



I'LL MEET YOU AT THE TRACK, NAN,  
JUST BEFORE THE RACE!

I'LL BE THERE!



WE'D BETTER LEAVE THE HORSES HERE,  
SHERIFF, AN' GO AHEAD ON FOOT! THE  
HIDEOUT'S NOT FAR AWAY!



THERE'S THE CABIN! DEKE AN' THE OTHERS MUST BE  
INSIDE, GENE!

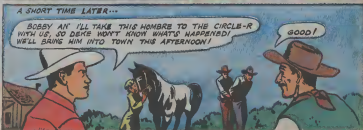
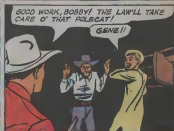


RECKON SO! WE'LL SPREAD OUT  
AN' OPEN FIRE WHEN YOU  
GIVE THE SIGNAL!



OKAY, BOYS! LET'S GO!





WE'VE GOT BOBBY AN' THE HORSE, BUT WE STILL HAVEN'T GOT THE GOODS ON DEKE!

MAYBE HE'LL TIP HIS HAND AT THE RODEO THIS AFTERNOON, WHEN HE SEES IMP AN' BOBBY!

I SURE HOPE SO! SEE YOU LATER, AUTRY!

THAT AFTERNOON...

DEKE! THE IMP'S HERE! HE'S GOIN' TO RACE!!

WHAT??!

AN' BOBBY'S RIDIN' HIM!...

THE JIG'S UP, DEKE!

LIKE BLAZES IT IS! EVERY CENT I'VE GOT IN THE WORLD IS BET ON SATAN THE SECOND!

IMP CAN'T RACE! YOU CAN HIT HIM EASY FROM HERE, SLASH!

BUT ...

GO ON, SLASH! SHOOT QUICK!

DROP THAT GUN!

